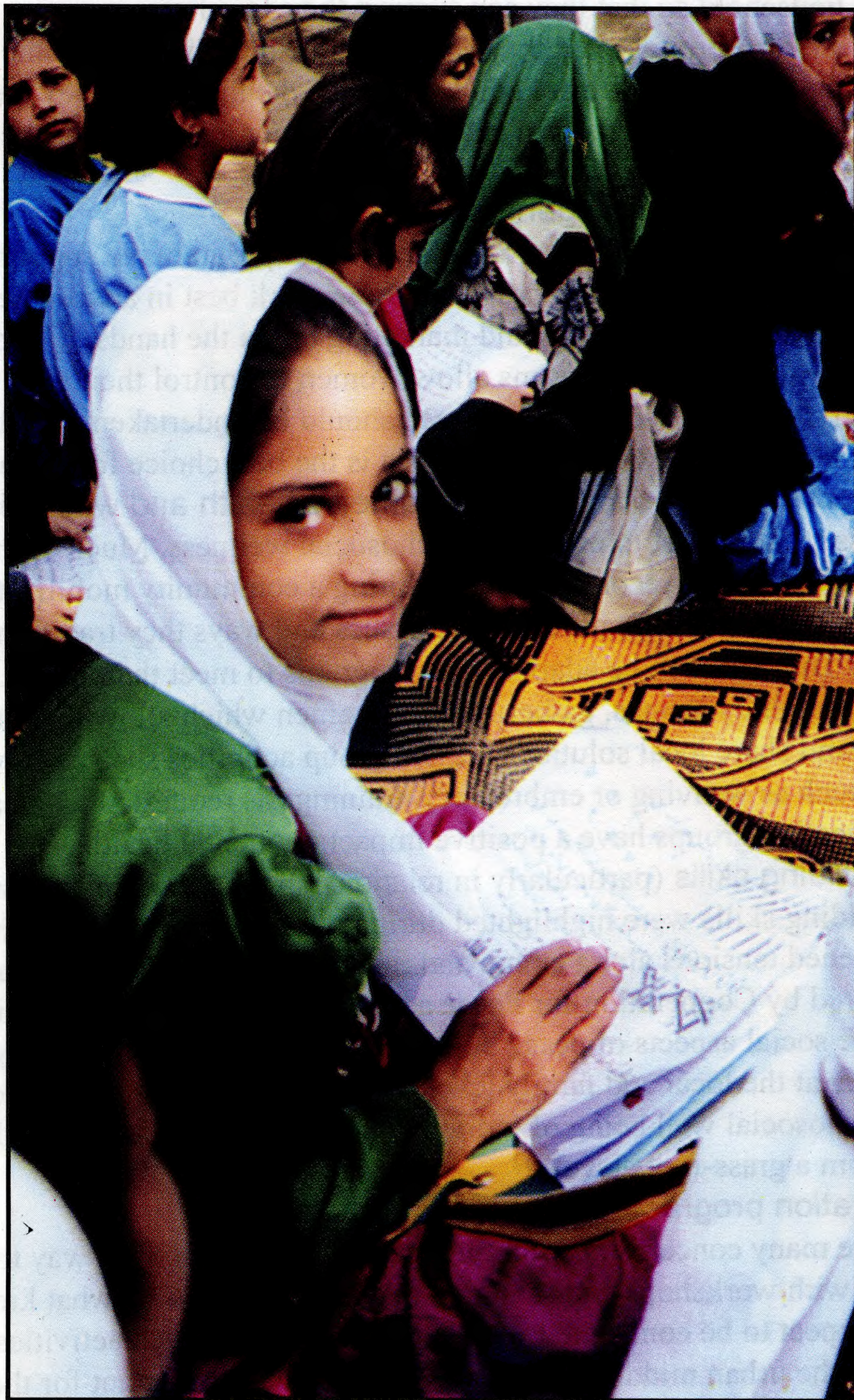
vary. Urban middle class widows may have very different needs from those of a village woman. Each group needs to participate in a needs assessment and in program development based on their identified needs. Income generation, women's and human rights training, special education opportunities (including job skills training and job placement) are all possible avenues for agencies to target.



Hopes and struggles for a bright future

Focus Group Workshop

There were three Focus Group Workshops held for Afghan women need assessment in Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. This report is based on summary of all these three workshops.

Purpose of the workshops:

To consult and document needs and priorities of Afghan refugee women from different walk of life residing in Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta concerning repatriation and women's need and strengths.

Facilitation of workshops:

This workshop was facilitated by Parwen Azim in Peshawar and Quetta and by Palwasha Hassan in Peshawar. The workshops were held in different cities of Pakistan as followings:
Rural Support Program in guesthouse of Islamabad
Save the children Sweden in Peshawar
ICMC (International Catholic Migration Commission) in Quetta

Number of participants:

The number of participants of the workshop was 55 women.
Eight (8) women from Islamabad; (27) from Peshawar and (20) from Quetta who were relating different fields of life such as professional teachers, doctors, lawyers, administrators, social workers, some jobless and some women with disabilities who were some highly educated blinds and deaf wo attended the workshops.

Procedure and methods used:

The atmosphere of each workshop was participatory and friendly. The attractive point of each workshop was the participants who were relating different fields so that they could deliver different ideas from different aspect of life concerning the objectives of the workshop.
The workshops were started with:

- A brief introduction of the project
- Introduction of the participants
- The working sessions (hopes, fears, and skills)
- Revision of the day

The participants were offered morning and afternoon tea and lunch between the sessions.

Objectives of the workshops:

- Fears and concern about returning to Afghanistan
- Hopes and interests in returning to Afghanistan
- Needs in order to contribute to Afghanistan's rehabilitation

A brief introduction of the project:

In the beginning of the day a brief description of the project and its background was given by the facilitators. The information was that the workshop was part of a need assessment study.
The study was in two parts:

- Survey and interviewing of refugee women from different camps in NWFP and urban areas.
- Three-consultation workshop with urban professional refugee women in Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta.

The working sessions (Hopes, Fears, and Needs):

The working sessions were started with discussion initiation at beginning of each session among the participants by throwing out some of the initial question by the facilitator. Then each participant was provided with flash cards to write their personal views and ideas. Then the flash cards were stacked on flipcharts in front of board of the participant. Each card was being read and discussed with the participants. The cards were then sort out in a special sequence to approach the main issues as hopes, fears, and skills.

Hopes and interest in returning to Afghanistan:

- Political changes and international promises
- Employment according to professional ability
- Feeling the responsibility toward the country
- Interest for oneself/ children to be educated
- Love and feeling for the country and its people
- Respect and consideration to Women's rights
- Owning one's own home
- Respect and dignity of identifying and belonging
- The interest working for women's human right
- Improvement of the country and end of poverty
- A broad based government in Afghanistan
- Having best technology system
- Having an honest leader who lead us
- Having good relations with international community with our country
- Hope of rebuilding the destroyed country
- Having everlasting peace all over the country
- Having hospitals and centers for people with disability
- Hope to have back our refugee in our country
- Hope to build all those places which have never been under construction
- Having transport facility around the country
- Hope to have fixed streets, roads, high ways, railways, and airports.
- Hope to give a bright future for our new generation
- Hope to be resident of our own province with having the facility of home, food, and school

Fears in returning to Afghanistan:

- Security
- Shelter/home
- Paid work
- Good education standard
- Women's rights

- Insufficient and good health services
- Taking care of *Hejab*
- Possibility for women to claim their rights
- Poverty
- Repatriation problems (house appliance shifting)
- Being jobless
- Problem of shifting of house appliances
- Economical problem like rent of house
- Education expanses
- Fear of conflicts again in the country

<u>Needs to contribute in reconstruction of Afghanistan:</u>

- Training for students who were six years away from education
- Teacher training
- Librarians
- Vocational and technical trainings for journalists
- Courses for development of writing skills
- Administration/ management
- Health education
- Traditional vocational training (wool spinning, kitchen, sewing etc)
- Radio program host/ speakers
- Driving course
- Training for video making and photography skills
- Civic trainings
- High education in specific fields
- Introduction of new technology in different areas
- Training in Leadership Gender, Child rights, Computer operating
- Kindergarten for children
- Training of Trainer (TOT)
- English language course
- Introduction of new skills
- An honest leader
- Having security
- Enough money for living
- Job according qualifications
- Training of rights abroad the country
- Educational center
- Literacy courses for illiterate people
- Agriculture improvement all above the country
- Needs for residence, schooling, clothing, food etc.
- Usage of minerals for improvements of the country
- Agriculture improvement all over the country
- Improvement of special sectors for people with disability
- Having intelligent doctor
- Having professional engineers to play a positive role in rebuilding of Afghanistan.

ANNEX I

Chart 1

URBAN WOMEN: HOPES
N= 367

1.	**Have positive feelings about going**	**127**
2.	Schools are important, Schools, training centers, courses	92
3.	Want to return to Afghanistan	75
4.	Husband and wife share decisions	69
5.	Return and work at profession	49
6.	Security	45
7.	Peace, with peace we will return	44
8.	Like to teach in school	34
9.	Want to teach or learn a trade (carpet weaving or embroidery)	33
10	Willing to wear Islamic hejab not burka	26
11.	Waiting for Loya Jirga	7
12.	Other Family have returned	7
13.	No plans to return	4
14.	Desire to contribute to reconstruction/repair	3

Chart 2

URBAN WOMEN: FEARS
N= 367

	Key Word or Phrase	Number of times found
1.	economic problems there, No work, no employment, no job	256
2.	No security, Bombs, war may start, terrorism	202
3.	No house	181
4.	School here, or no school there	143
5.	Transportation expenses needed	33
6.	No water and or no electricity or gas	28
7.	Lack of hospital and health care	26
8.	No fear	25
1.	everything is too expensive including rents	19
2.	House destroyed or damaged	18
3.	No peace	11
4.	Fear of reprisals	10
5.	Restore job	8
6.	Robbery	6
7.	Don't want to go	5
8.	No family has gone yet	5
9.	Young when left, have not seen	5
10.	Family member has mental problems	5
11.	Waiting for Loya Girga	5
12.	No plans to return yet	4
13.	Deserted by husband or husband abroad	4
14.	Don't like religious restrictions (hejab ok, Chadari not)	4
15.	Lose money from house deposit if leave for Afghanistan	3
16.	Unsure about situation, unstable	3
17.	Ethnic problems	3
18.	Situation will be worse in Kabul than in Pakistan	2
19.	We have nothing there	2
20.	No interest in going back	2
21.	Way closed between Af/Pak	2
22.	No decision	2
23.	Political situation	2
24.	Many problems to return	1
25.	No permission from husband to work	1
26.	Have to pay bribe to get old job back	1
27.	Women's rights needed	1
28.	Need food	1

Annex 1, Chart 3

Skills
URBAN WOMEN
N= 367

1.	**Tailoring**	**92**
2.	Teaching a handicraft	67
3.	Carpet weaving	57
4.	Embroidery	55
5.	No skill	35
6.	Worked in a job	34
7.	Stitching	30
8.	Knitting	17
9.	Beadwork	14
10.	Sewing	11
11.	Hand work	9
12.	Cooking (like jams)	7
13.	Beauty parlor	3
14.	Other	14

Chart 4

Needs
URBAN WOMEN
N= 367

1.	**Education**	**47**
2.	Jobs	39
3.	English	26
4.	Literacy	24
5.	Training	22
6.	Vocational training (tailoring, stitching, embroidery for sale)	22
7.	Computer course	17
8.	Quran Sharif	12
9.	Other	7
10.	Management training	4

Number of Children
URBAN WOMEN
N= 367

Not reported: 11 unknown (data not clear)
Single=32
Widowed=13
0=10
1=13
2=34
3=28
4=48
5=45
6=23
7=17
8=14
9=13
10=8
>10=6

249 mothers had an average of children 4.90, with a mean of 4. Of these mothers, 126 women had 5 or more children.

Number in household: URBAN WOMEN

N= 367
>20 =2
11-19 =0
10-14 =43
5-9 =125
<5 =24
unknown =

Annex 2

Chart 1

Camp Hopes N=189

Hopes	**#**
Education, studying, courses, trainings	27
hopeful	26
Want to go home	15
Security /No war	12
Husband shares	9
Will return if freedom, peace comes	9
No fears	4
English	4
Does not share	4
Find old jobs/ get old jobs back	3
Computer training for children	3
Won't go	1

Chart 2

Camps Fears N=189

Fears and concerns about returning to Afghanistan	#
Bombs, war may start, terrorism, Taliban, landmines	137
No house	98
Economic problems there, No work, no employment, no job	98
School here, or no school there	69
Widow so my situation will be bad	30
Family member disabled	19
Family member killed	14
Transportation expenses needed	10
Family member has mental problems	9
Fear of hunger or starvation	6
House destroyed or damaged	6
If no war, we will return	6
No father	5
Don't want to go	4
Family member in jail	4
No water	4
Lack of hospital and health care	3
No peace	3
Have to move as camp is being demolished	3
Waiting for Loya Jirga	2
Don't like religious restrictions (hejab ok, Chadari not)	2
Fear of reprisals	1
Everything is too expensive including rents	1
Deserted by husband or husband abroad	1
Restore job	1

Introduction

Afghan Women's Network is a nonpartisan coordinating body, promoting the rights of Afghan women and children at national and international levels and serving to strengthen solidarity among Afghan women within Afghanistan and the Diaspora. In 1995 seven Afghan women participants of the United Nations (UN) fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China along with other Afghan women decided to establish the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and developed a formal structure in 1996. At the present time there are 24 NGOs and 900 individuals who have the membership of AWN.

AWN is interested in understanding the needs of Afghan women with regards to repatriation from Pakistan. It was decided that a needs assessment would be conducted to understand the following:

- What women have in the way of skills, knowledge;
- What are women's needs for the future, their plans for the future;
- Will women return with their families and when might they return;
- If they are not going back, what are their reasons for not returning;
- What women need but don't have when they return;
- What do they need to contribute to the reconstruction and to their own lives and that of their families' lives;
- What they need to be able to return to Afghanistan; and
- What are women worried about with regard to returning to Afghanistan.

Needs Assessment to be conducted by AWN survey teams in camps and in Peshawar. The survey tried to capture the opinions of educated and uneducated women in NWFP. In addition, focus group discussions were held in 3 Pakistan urban areas (Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta).

Methodology

The project began with a 12 day workshop, 26 February to 12 March. The program included 2 days creating the survey protocol. This was conducted by the consultant and allowed the women the opportunity to learn about survey design. This was followed by 10 days PRA training by a CeReTechs trainer and an AWN counterpart, who would act as the supervisor for the survey teams. The workshop allowed the participants ample opportunity to practice their survey skills as they learned various PRA methods. After 2 days in the workshop, the participants traveled to a nearby refugee camp in order to test their skills and the survey questions.

After the workshop was completed, participants began the survey in refugee camps in NWFP and urban areas of Peshawar. Data collection continued to mid April. In the end over 500 women were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. Women interviewed were married and unmarried, of all ages (youth through elders), literate and illiterate. In addition, three focus groups were held in Quetta, Islamabad and Peshawar in May and June.

In April, a one day workshop was held to prepare AWN staff to conduct focus group meeting in three cities. This workshop was designed to allow participants the opportunity to explore

Chart 3

Camp Skills N=189

Skills	**#**
Carpet weaving	**63**
Tailoring	46
Teacher	29
None	22
Stitching	19
Embroidery	19
sewing	12
Handicrafts	6
Knitting	3
Bead work	2
Blanket making	2
Beauty parlor	1

Chart 4

Camp Needs N=189

Needs	**#**
Transport	16
Food	12
A home in Af	11
Education	10
Work or job	9
English	8
Help for husband	2
Tools like sewing machines	1

Number of Children: Camps N=189

Not reported: 29

0=21 both single women and women who are married but have no children

1=9

2=12

3=20

4=17

5=14

6=23

7=13

8=18

9=4

10=5

>10=1

136 mothers with an average of 5.15 children and a mean of 5 children. 78 (57%) of the women with children have 5 or more children in the sample.

Number in Camp households N=189

>20 =2

15-19 =4

10-14 =28

5-9 =76

<5 =19

unknown=57

Wishing For a Bright Future

Funder and supporters:

Funded by: USAID

Supported by: Organizations and individuals

➢ **Organizations:**
- IOM
- American Friends Group
- CeRe Techs
- IRC
- AWWD

➢ **Individuals:**
- Dr. Patricia Omidian Consultant of the project
- Ms. Afifa Azim Coordinator AWN
- Ms. Khorsheed Noori Chairperson AWN
- Ms. Palwasha Hassan Director AWEC
- Ms. Najia Zewari Executive Committee Member AWN
- Ms. Parwin Azimi Program Officer UNOPS
- Ms. Saliha Tawfiq Field Help Manager IRC
- Ms. Jamila Akbarzai Director AWWD
- Research team of AWN



focus group techniques, practice their skills and become familiar with the goals of the survey. The reports from each focus group were sent to the consultant by email and are found in Annex 3.

After data was collected, it was translated by the survey supervisor and other AWN members. The data was then sent to the CeReTechs office, where it was entered into the computer in MS WORD by the clerical staff. Finally, data was analyzed using content analysis and other qualitative methods.

Hopes

Urban women expressed very hopeful feelings toward returning to Afghanistan. Of 367 women interviewed, 127 (35%) said they have positive feelings about returning and 75 (20%) women stated that they want to return. Only 4 (1%) women said they have no plans to return. Some women said that their families were only waiting for the results of the Loya Jirga before they finalized plans for their return. 89 (24%) women hoped that their country would have peace and security so that their could return. At the time of the survey, only 7 women said that other family members had already returned to Afghanistan. (See Chart 1, Annex 1)

The most frequent comments with regards to the women's hopes for Afghanistan and their return had to do with work and education.

> I was a teacher in Afghanistan, but now I am jobless. My husband is a doctor. In 10 years I have lost everything and want to start them again. I would like to be a teacher again.

Another said:

> I was a government worker and would like to return to it.

Women hoped they would be able to return to their former professions (49 or 13%). 34 (9%) hoped to teach school again in Afghanistan and 33 (9%) want to teach or learn a vocational skill, such as carpet weaving or embroidery. Many women said statements like the one below:

> I want to continue my job there in Afghanistan too as a teacher.

Of the women interviewed, 69 (18%) comments that they have a say in the family's decision to return. (See Chart 1, Annex 1)

Camp women expressed some of the same hopes and expectations as the Urban women, but there were substantial differences, as well. Compared to the urban women, fewer camp women were positive about returning. Of the 189 women interviewed in camps, 26 (14%) were hopeful about Afghanistan's future and 15 (8%) stated that they want to return. Only one woman said she would not return. Yet, like their urban counterparts, camp women (27 or 14%) were interested in education for themselves and their children. Some want training centers for vocational training, skills, Quran and English. Some women also want their children to be able to work and to bring money home, such as one woman requesting a carpet weaving center that her children could work at. In probing about plans for returning, most camp women said that their husbands do not consider their opinion in decisions about the family. Only 9 (5%) women said their husbands took their opinion into account. One woman said:

> The economic situation will improve and we are planning to go. Afghanistan is our motherland, we want to go there. My relatives have gone there already. I

have positive idea to go there and reconstruct it.

Others were not as positive:

I fear God and fighting. I have no plans to return because of security. We have no house. We are poor, my husband does daily labor and one son is disabled.

(See Annex 2, Chart 1)

Focus groups hopes included security and economic stability, but they also discussed the need for women's rights to be recognized in the new environment. Much of their discussion centered on a positive result from the Loya Jirga. They also called for respect for person and property, high standard for education, women's rights and peace and unity in Afghanistan.

Summary of Hopes

Urban and rural women have very different ways of approaching the world. This results in differences in their needs and concerns. Urban women listed a wider variety of hopes and desires regarding their return to Afghanistan. Education was one of the important topics they noted. These women want education for themselves and their children and hope to find such programs in Afghanistan when they return. Although some of their requests were economically motivated, there was a clear interest in education as a way to improve the future of their family and their children.

Rural women, in contrast, focused more on skills and methods of income generation. Many stories given by the women reflect this need. It is clear from studies conducted around the world that a family's reliance on income brought in by their children–whether through begging or laboring as an apprentice–does not significantly improve the economic security of the family. Afghan rural women clearly see their children as potential wage earners, even at a young age. That the women feel trapped in poverty is clear. A number of women complained that their children have to work to earn money for the families but that they would rather the children attend schools. They regret that they are so poor the children cannot study. Most of the women referred to carpet weaving, but one woman noted that her children are begging for food for the family. The concern about school is not so much about the lack of education in Afghanistan, but, rather, the lack of resources that would allow the families to take advantage of any education system that exists.

Fears

Urban and rural women expressed many concerns about returning to Afghanistan. Urban women were very much concerned with the economic situation and the prospects of a return to violence and war. The greatest concern was with the economic situation in Afghanistan. 256 (70%) noted this as their primary concern. Lack of security, the chance that the war could start again, and the fear of terrorism was also given as a major concern by 202 (55%) of those interviewed. Housing (181 or 49%) and lack of schools for their children (143 or 39%) were also important. As one young woman said:

I don't want to go to Kabul, because I have no home there. And I want to continue my education here in Pakistan.

Of interest is that 25 (7%) women stated that they have no fears or concerns about returning to their homeland. Most other concerns related to the problems of living in a country with a severely damaged infrastructure and too few homes (See Annex 1, Chart 2).

Rural camp women listed many of the same concerns. The most frequently noted concern is that of security and the resumption of the war. This was noted by 109 (58%) of the women interviewed in the camps. Housing and economic problems were both frequently listed as concerns (each noted 98 times or 52%) . Education for their children (69 or 37%) were also noted. One woman said:

> Life in our homeland will be better than the life here. So tired of weaving carpets. we want to be educated.

Other concerns related to problems left from the war, like disability or death of family members, hunger or lack of housing. Another said:

> I am not planning to return because my brothers have been killed there and I don't have any good memory. War may start again. I have no home. I have mental problems. But here in Pakistan we face a very poor economy and many debts. My husband is jobless.

Women in the rural camps had less access to information to assess their needs but listed immediate concerns, including problems with camp life. (See Annex 2, Chart 2)

Focus groups came up with very similar fears as those of the semi-structured interviews of camp and urban women. Security and employment problems topped their lists. There was also an expressed fear that the fundamentalist groups would regain control of the country and destroy their chances for advancing women's rights and issues. Most women in the focus groups also noted the fear that health services would be insufficient.

Lack of health care in Afghanistan was also cited as a reason for not returning. There were many women who felt they or their family member would not have access to critical health care if they tried to repatriate. This is illustrated in the following:

> Now: my mother-in-law has asthma problems and she needs medical treatment. (Surveyor: We could see she was really in trouble, and had to use oxygen cylinder and they don't have money to cure her.)

Others had similar stories. Health education and health access in Afghanistan are critical issues to be addressed, especially for those with chronic illnesses. Much can be accomplished by solid health education and health promotion programming. This could be started here in Pakistan.

Skills

Urban and rural women noted many skills they possess, which can be used to help support their families if given the opportunity to market these skills or products. In the urban area 92 (25%) of the women know tailoring. Other skills noted by women include carpet weaving, embroidery, stitching, hand work, beading, knitting, cooking and beauty salon work. Many women (67 or 18%) stated a desire to train others in a skill (See Annex 1, Chart 3). Rural women listed very similar skills as those of the urban woman, with carpet weaving (63 or 33%) and tailoring (46 or 24%) being the most common. Carpet weaving earns about 1250 RS a month for a family and can be a substantial contribution to the family income. Women also offered to teach others their skills (See Annex 2, Chart 3). This knowledge is important because much of it includes arts that will be lost if women do not train others. Also, such skills allow women to earn a bit of money and contribute to their families' well being. This, in turn, empowers the women and promotes their mental health and well being.

Training Needs

Learning skills to support family or help support family was a common theme for the urban women in Peshawar. Urban women had many ideas about what they want with regard to training. Although there was no single point that was noted by a majority, all women had some kind of education or training they wanted for themselves. Some wanted to continue their education (47 or 13%), others wanted jobs and job skills (39 or 11%). English, literacy and vocational training were also noted a priorities. 17 women asked for computer training and 12 want to learn the Quran Sharif. Four women requested management training (See Annex 1, Chart 4). But some women expressed their frustration and another kind of training need:

> If I go to Kabul, I can't work there, because my husband doesn't give me permission, I know no skills and can't go to an institute or training center for learning something, because I don't have the permission. If a teacher is supplied to me at home that will be good.

Rural women focused on economic needs, rather than training needs. Only 69 women identified needs when prompted. Of these needs, only 30 were for specific courses that might help them generate an income for their families. Some asked for literacy, which is important since 97/189 claimed to have some education. Most asked for help with transport back to Afghanistan, food or housing. As this woman says:

> $100 aren't enough. Rs3000 are only the transportation costs. It doesn't work. That is why we don't go. They should build home for us and give us one year expenses

This illustrates an aspect of dependency that should be addressed through community mobilization workshops. In the interviews, particularly with rural women, but also with the urban poor, the most common request was for the government to establish jobs and housing for them and their families.

Both rural and urban women are in need of literacy programs for themselves and their families. Of the 367 urban women, 119 (32%) are completely illiterate and another. The survey showed a wide range of education levels for urban women: 12 had university and or post-graduate training; 14 completed 12th class; 24 attended 7-11th class; 20 attended 1st to 6th class. 93 women stated they had education but did not specify how much. Of the 189 rural women interviewed, 97 (51%) stated that they were uneducated. Those who stated they had education did not state to which level they had attended school. But, clearly, education is needed by most women in the survey. Even those who are literate may need more education in order to read and understand what they read.

Focus groups identified training needs that included teacher training, administration and management, health education, librarian training, as well as other refresher courses for those who want to return to their civil service jobs.

> Need jobs there and we want to go for higher education, too. These people who have skills are good for reconstruction of Afghanistan.

They also requested human rights awareness, family planning and family support units and health education.

One of the important needs identified through the demographics of the survey participants is

that of family planning. In the camps, 136 mothers reported an average of 5.15 children and a mean of 5 children; 78 (57%) of the women have 5 or more children in this sample. The urban women had only slightly smaller families. In the sample, 249 mothers had an average of children 4.90, with a mean of 4. Of these mothers, 126 (51%) women had 5 or more children (see Annex 1, Chart5; Annex 2, Chart 5).

Finally, it is clear from the urban and rural surveys that there are many widows. There were 13 (4%) in the urban sample and 30 (16%) in the rural sample. Women also reported many cases of being the head of the household or needing support because their husband was jailed, sick or injured. These women face the greatest risk of absolute poverty and are the most vulnerable. One women said:

> My husband lost his mind from bombing and is paralyzed. We have no house, nothing. I fear fighting will return.

There is a clear need for many kinds of education and training services for Afghans returning to Afghanistan. That women have special needs and concerns is also clear. Yet the women place their lives in the context of their families so much of their needs and concerns reflect this integrated approach and concern. This means that a balanced approach is called for in the implementation of any programming. If only women are targeted, they, themselves, will see it as an injustice to the males in their families. They asked for work for their spouses, as well.

> My husband needs a job and we need help from the government.

This statement was very common among the women and reflects this concern for their family. Women recognized the need for economic stability in order for their children to attend school. This was particularly true for rural women and can only be achieved when their husbands are employed or they, if they are the breadwinner for the family, have sufficient income to cover basic needs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women surveyed in March and April were very clear about their concerns regarding repatriation. They noted security concerns and economic problems as barriers to their families return to Afghanistan. Rural women noted concerns about safety, hunger and housing as important issues. Urban women focused on safety, housing, economics and education. Such concerns need to be addressed by international and national agencies, as well as the fledgling Afghan government. But what was also clear was a need for planning and community mobilization training for women and their communities in order to help them be more self-sufficient. It is unrealistic for the impoverished government to take on the task of rebuilding communities, when the community members could have that capacity. Education, health care and security are areas where outsiders can be of help.

Training needs include the following:

- **Community mobilization**

  Community mobilization was listed by women as a means to improve the situation in their local communities. Almost all women noted that reconstruction includes revitalizing their communities and bringing cooperation back into their lives.

- **Family planning information and access to services for child spacing**

  Women want better access and information on family planning and spacing of children in their families. This does not mean that women necessarily want smaller families, but they do wish to have more control over when they conceive. There is still a great deal of pressure within families to have large families. What the women are asking for is to have large, *healthy* families.

- **General literacy training for women**

  Women generally requested literacy for themselves and their family members as a way to improve their lives and that of their families. Those with no education stated that they would like home schools or classes in their local neighborhoods, that allowed women to maintain their work load at home, while still accessing the benefits of such training.

- **Vocational training.**

  Women need skills to help support their families, as well as ways to market those skills most effectively. Their request included carpet weaving, embroidery, handicraft, tailoring, beauty salon and etc. Many women also noted that they have these skills and would be happy teaching others as a way to add income to their families.

- **Marketing skills training for those who do in-home income generation work**

  As noted above, women see the need to learn skills and then to market the products of their efforts. These two points are interconnected and should be part of a single training package.

- **English language training**

  Many women interviewed in urban settings requested English language skills for themselves and family members. They see this as an important step for improving their ability to find employment.

- **Computer training**

  Like English language training, computer skills are seen as an important part of modern office employment. The courses for computer can be jointly taught with courses in computer. With the current Persian and Pashto programs available, women can be trained in computers, without having to learn a foreign language, making the process of learning easier.

- **Quran Sharif**

  Many women would like the opportunity to learn to read and or understand their Holy Book, the Quran Sharif. Courses, such as this, have a very positive psychosocial effect on women, as they are an excellent opportunity for women to come together in a way that is culturally acceptable and share their lives.

- **Management training**

  Some of the urban women interviewed in this study were formerly government employees at management levels. Others are, or were, employed in local or international NGO's. These women see a need to improve their skills as managers. Those who have been out of work while living as refugees in Pakistan, see this as an opportunity to refresh their skills. Such trainings would be very important.

- **Teacher training**
  Many teachers in Afghanistan have spent a number of years in Pakistan, either unemployed or in jobs other than teaching. These women expressed the desire to update their skills or to learn new techniques. Other women said that they would like to be teachers, though they had not been in the past.
- **Drivers training**
  A few bold women requested driver training. They remember the time, before the war when women drove and had greater freedoms in the capital. Such training may seem frivolous but are symbolically important to the restoration of normal life after so many years of fighting.



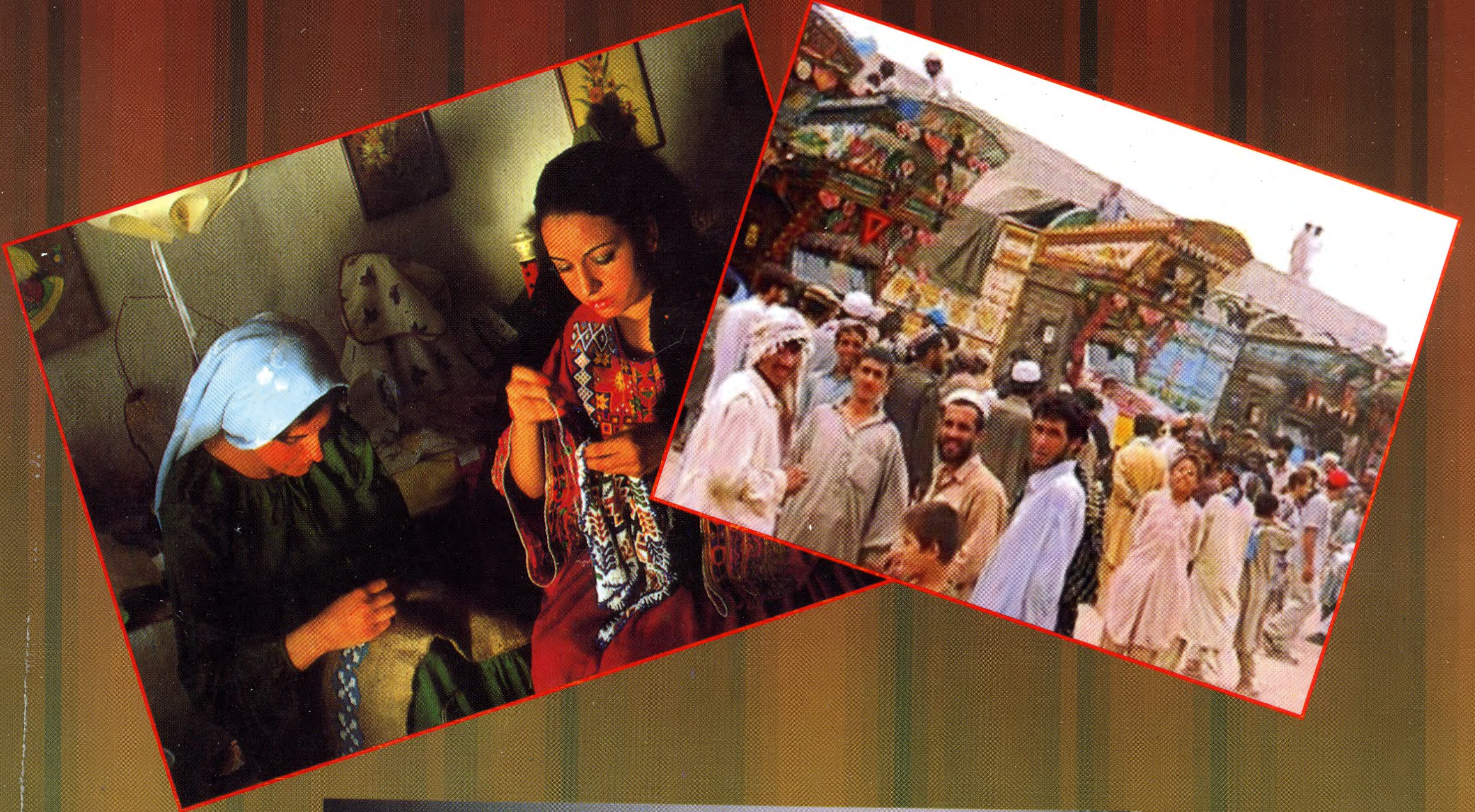
Hopes and struggles for a bright future

Other needs:

- **Training on what to expect upon return to Afghanistan**
  This would include basic survival during reconstruction period, maybe through public meetings and discussion groups. Community mobilization processes should be included in this training, as well as landmine education, safety and disease prevention procedures.
- **Training programs (including vocational training) for husbands and adult males** in household so that they can support their families.
  Women feel very strongly that they should not be the primary income generation person in the family, if there are adult males to take that role. They feel that it harms the mental well-being of the men and creates greater problems for the women at the same time.
- **Initial supplies for income generation activities,**
  There is a need for carefully planned micro-credit programs to support women's (and families) in income generation projects. These work best in areas where traditional crafts exist and where materials and marketing are in the hands of middle men. In these areas, micro-credit programs allow women to control their own means of production. A careful survey of each area should be undertaken in order to understand what women want and whether this system is the best choice for them.
- **Psychosocial activities to promote women's health and well-being**
  Many possibilities exist to promote psychosocial wellness. Much of this is based in traditional practices. I recommend that, during a community mobilization process, women are polled on their psychosocial issues and ways they traditionally cope with problems. This can then be adapted into programs to meet their needs. Other methods include community groups, gatherings, for women which allow them to discuss their problems and share local solutions. Often, group activities such as income generation projects, such as weaving or embroidery, trainings as requested by local women or health education groups have a positive impact on mental health.
- **Peace building skills** (particularly in relationship to inter-ethnic tensions)
  Peace building skills were highlighted during the focus groups, as women are aware of the heightened tensions along ethnic and regional boundaries. Such trainings, like those offered by Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), allow participants to explore the social aspects of peace building, rather than the political, national level. By working at the local and family level, peace building workshops would contribute to the psychosocial well being of individuals and communities, as well as foster civil society from a grass-roots level.
- **Re-integration programs for returning refugees**
  There were many concerns about returning to Afghanistan. One way to help the process is with workshops and seminars that let women know what kinds of problems they can expect to be confronted with upon their return. Such activities would be most helpful for the urban middle class. This is particularly important for those who have been away for many years. These problems include but are not limited to inflation, destruction of homes and businesses, lack of water and or electricity, changes in the employment situation and changes in attitudes between those who stayed
- **Special programs for widows**
  This war has created one of the highest populations of widows in the world. These women are particularly vulnerable and in need of special services. But their needs

NEED ASSESSMENT

AFGHAN WOMEN'S HOPES, FEARS AND NEEDS (BASIC AND TRAINING) AND REPATRIATION TO AFGHANISTAN





Afghan Women`s Network

AWN

Peshawar Office

July 12,,2002

Preface

As Afghan people are hoping for a new start for their country in an atmosphere of peace and security; women and children are ready to be direct players involved in this process and will contribute to paving the way to peaceful future for Afghanistan.

This report is comprehensive study stipulating Afghan women skills and capabilities and their needs in different sectors, levels and aspects of life depicting their desire for contribution in the reconstruction process. As the survey is conducted among the refugee women both from camps and within urban community including NGO and other civil society actors it also could be a good guide for the repatriation needs of the refugee women.

Afghan women Network do present this study to solicit all those donor agencies, governmental agencies international NGOs, local NGOs, and private sectors who work for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan to plan their projects according the basic and technological needs of Afghan women in different provinces, cities, and rurals and the programs should consider their worthwhile in decision making measures.

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